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WHITE AMERICANS IN RURAL POVERTY.

BY- BIRD, ALAN R. MCCOY, JOHN L.
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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POOR RURAL WHITES ARE A MAJOR AND PERSISTENT POVERTY PROBLEM, AND HAVE RECEIVED INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT--(1) WHITES IN POVERTY TEND TO BE SEPARATED FROM MAJOR NATIONAL MARKETS AND THE GENERALLY ACCEPTED AMERICAN WAYS OF LIFE, (2) EMERGENCE OF MANY SPECIAL PROGRAMS TO CATER TO "TARGET GROUPS" ON THE BASIS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL NEED TEND TO ACCENTUATE THIS SEPARATION, (3) SUCH SEPARATION MAY WORK TO THE DETRIMENT OF POOR RURAL WHITES, (4) MAJOR NEW PROGRAMS OR MAJOR REORIENTATIONS OF PRESENT PROGRAMS MAY BE NEEDED TO REMEDY THIS SITUATION, AND (5) THIS NEW PROGRAM EMPHASIS SHOULD BE TOWARD UNIFIED EFFORTS THAT PROVIDE CONTINUING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CITIZENS. WHILE POOR RURAL WHITES TEND TO SHARE IN SOME OF THE SAME TYPES OF DISADVANTAGEMENT AS OTHER POOR GROUPS, SOME UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR GROUP ARE--(1) A TENDENCY TO IDENTIFY POVERTY AS A NONWHITE PROBLEM, AND FOR THE WHITE COMMUNITY TO CONSIDER PROGRAMS IN THESE AREAS TO BE AIMED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY AT THE NEGRO COMMUNITY, (2) A TREND OF INCREASING COMPETITION AMONG WHITES AND NONWHITES FOR THE FEW AVAILABLE INCOME OPPORTUNITIES IN DEPRESSED AREAS, (3) AN EMPHASIS ON EXPECTED SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF ALL AGE GROUPS AS A QUALIFYING CONDITION FOR PROGRAM BENEFITS, AND (4) A COMMUNICATION BARRIER AMONG THE POOR. (ES)

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WHITE AMERICANS IN RURAL POVERTY

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HIGHLIGHTS

1. White Americans in rural areas are a major and persistent poverty problem in the Nation. Estimates concerning the extent of this problem are based on an extension beyond the census definition of rural to include all nonmetropolitan territory outside of central cities and urban fringe. In 1960, there were 9.65 million families (white and nonwhite) in the Nation whose 1959 net cash incomes were less than $3,000. Of this number, some 6.1 million families lived in nonmetropolitan areas. Eighty percent of these families were white. This proportion of poor rural whites is likely to be at least as high today. Although Spanish Americans are included in the census of the white population, they are excluded from this discussion, because their problems are the subject of a special paper.

2. Special problems of these whites in poverty reflect their relative anonymity, lack of organization, and lack of a common identity. Although concentrated in parts of Appalachia, the Ozarks, and the South, they are for the most part a scattered population located in many small hamlets, farming villages, and open country, including affluent farming areas.

3. Their poverty, like the poverty of other Americans, is complex, and can be defined for purposes of this discussion as: A relative lack of achievement motivation and/or economic opportunity, including an unawareness of or incapacity to participate in social and economic activities valued by U.S. citizens generally as necessary goals for a full life.

4. In lieu of conclusions, this paper suggests that (1) poor rural whites, as with other disadvantaged subgroups, tend to be separated in attitude, behavior, and physical location from major national markets (particularly labor markets) and the generally accepted American ways of life; (2) emergence of many special programs to cater to "target groups" on the basis of economic and social need, together with increasingly exclusive definitions of these groups, tends to accentuate this separation; (3) such separation may work particularly to the detriment of poor rural whites, and those with incomes just above arbitrary poverty lines; (4) major new programs or major orientations of present programs, including consolidation of these programs, may be needed to remedy this situation; (5) this needed new program emphasis should be toward unified efforts that provide continuing opportunities for all citizens, rather than further polarization and fragmentation of "special groups"; and (6) this new emphasis will likely involve development of programs for all nonmetropolitan territory that strengthen the effectiveness of programs in census-defined rural areas.

5. Four types of nonmetropolitan areas where whites of poverty status are located were classified as follows:

I.--A depressed area with a majority of poor whites.

II.--A relatively affluent area with a poor white minority.

III.--A relatively depressed area with a minority of poor whites and a poor nonwhite majority.

IV.--Areas ranging from poor to affluent with approximately equal proportions of poor whites and poor nonwhites.

6. Special disadvantages of poor rural whites are:

   -- The tendency to identify poverty as a Negro problem only.

   -- The increasing competition among poor and not-so-poor for limited job and other income opportunities in depressed areas.

   -- Emphasis on social participation to qualify for benefits under some programs.

   -- Communication difficulties, including inadequate understanding or exchange of ideas between poverty and nonpoverty groups.

7. Implied special needs are:

   -- Further coordinated efforts at regional and national levels to increase nonfarm job and income opportunities.

   -- Revision of qualifying conditions for some programs.

   -- Relocation or compensation payments for rural poverty owners (farm and nonfarm).

   -- Continued strong emphasis on upgrading education and relevant training for all children including preschool and elementary children, and exceptional children.

   -- Complementary education, training, and remedial programs for adults.

   -- Continued improvements in data collection, analysis and interpretation, so that community leaders, program managers, and citizens generally have an adequate basis for developing and implementing improved programs.

WHITE AMERICANS IN RURAL POVERTY

By

Alan R. Bird and John L. McCoy 1/
Economic Development Division
Economic Research Service

INTRODUCTION

Poor rural whites are a major and persistent poverty problem. They have not commonly been the subject of special studies, although they predominate in some well-studied areas, notably parts of Appalachia.

While many of the problems associated with poverty are regionally concentrated and ethnically linked, most of the rural poor scattered through thousands of villages and farming communities are white. In contrast with nonwhites, white Americans in rural poverty tend to command little public attention. Unlike Negroes, for example, they represent no particular constituency, generally lack unity of purpose and organization, and have no special identification with a social movement aimed at human rights. For these and other reasons, the white poor, when compared with specific nonwhite minorities, tend to be more unnoticed and relatively isolated from the mainstream of contemporary life.

APPROACH AND OVERVIEW

This paper is not a statistical compendium of characteristics of poor rural whites. Rather, it is an attempt to point to the special economic and community circumstances of these people. The purpose is to provide a basis for policy and program improvements that may enrich the lives of all citizens, poor and not-so-poor, white and nonwhite, rural and nonrural.

No definitive answers are presented. The evidence is not available for such conclusions, even though present poverty programs often assume such conclusions have been made.

THE PROBLEM

Poverty cannot be reduced to the oversimplification of a lack of income alone, although this is obviously the core factor. Regardless of color, residence, or particular beliefs, all poor share a common set of needs tied closely to a severe lack of personal and community resources. Some of the same problems which plague Spanish Americans, Negroes, and Puerto Ricans are the basic concerns of deprived white Americans of Anglo-European origin as well.

1/ The authors wish to thank Helen Johnson, John H. Southern, Calvin L. Beale, Robert B. Glasgow, John M. Zimmer, and other colleagues for their help. This report is part of continuing research in cooperation with the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Poor rural whites generally have a better chance than poor nonwhites to acquire most available jobs. However, many of those less affected than nonwhites by discriminatory practices have not been placed in full-time jobs or provided with other income opportunities to enable them to escape from poverty.

Most of the rural poor are white, even though the proportion of poor people is higher for nonwhites than whites. For 1964, the Office of Economic Opportunity estimated that of the total of 34.3 million in poverty, 23.7 million were white (14). 2/ Using census definitions, rural farm and nonfarm people combined constitute less than one-third of the U.S. population, but account for almost half its poverty. Using the interim definition of poverty as family income of less than $3,000, the 1960 census showed that 46 percent of all families with incomes below this level lived in rural areas (6) (fig. 1). Of all farm families in poverty, 85 percent were white--a ratio of about four poor whites to every poor nonwhite. When the rural nonfarm population is included, this ratio drops to about 3 to 1 (2). 3/

Where are the poor whites likely to be found? The poverty of white Americans is pervasive and diffuse--thinly scattered over the open country, hamlets, villages, lumbering camps, and mining and farming areas. One such group often associated with poverty conditions is the hired farm working force. In 1965, it was estimated that about 70 percent of this group of 3.1 million workers were whites (1). Of this total work force, only about 15 percent were migratory laborers; and of this sub-group, 78 percent were white, including Spanish Americans. According to 1960 estimates, Spanish Americans made up about 25 percent of the migratory labor force of that year, but only 5 percent of the nonmigratory workers (10).

Successive generations of poor whites, along with recent migrants, live in islands of rural folk culture in some large cities. This element of the rural poverty population is not included in our statistics nor discussed further, although many of the problems of the urban ghetto have resulted, in part, from inmigration of poor, rural people. Depressed areas such as Appalachia, the Ozarks, and sections of the Northern Great Lakes States also account for large numbers. Regional concentration resulting from higher population densities of whites accounts for higher white-nonwhite ratios in the northern States. In the North, about 99 percent of the farm families in poverty are white; in the West, 93 percent; and in the South, where nonwhite population density is higher, the poor farm population is still 73 percent white and this percentage is increasing (3). Because the South is generally lagging in economic development (although it recently has shown a high rate of growth), the limited income opportunities for the white population remain a major problem.

WORKING DEFINITIONS

For conceptual and program purposes, the communities included within our discussion refer to those outside central cities and the urban fringe; that is, all nonmetropolitan territory plus outlying portions of nonmetropolitan areas, as defined by the Bureau of the Census. We have extended our coverage of the rural poverty problem to include

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2/ Underscored numbers in parentheses refer to items in the Literature Cited, p. 18.

3/ Ordinarily, Americans with Spanish surnames are included within the census of the white population. Hence, the above estimates include this subgroup. However, we have excluded further specific treatment of problems associated with them, since they are treated in a separate paper. The largest concentration of Spanish-surname people consists of 3.5 million in five Southwestern States (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas). Although predominantly rural only a few decades ago, this Southwestern group was nearly 80 percent urban by 1960 (12).

NUMBER OF RURAL FAMILIES WITH INCOMES UNDER $3,000, 1959

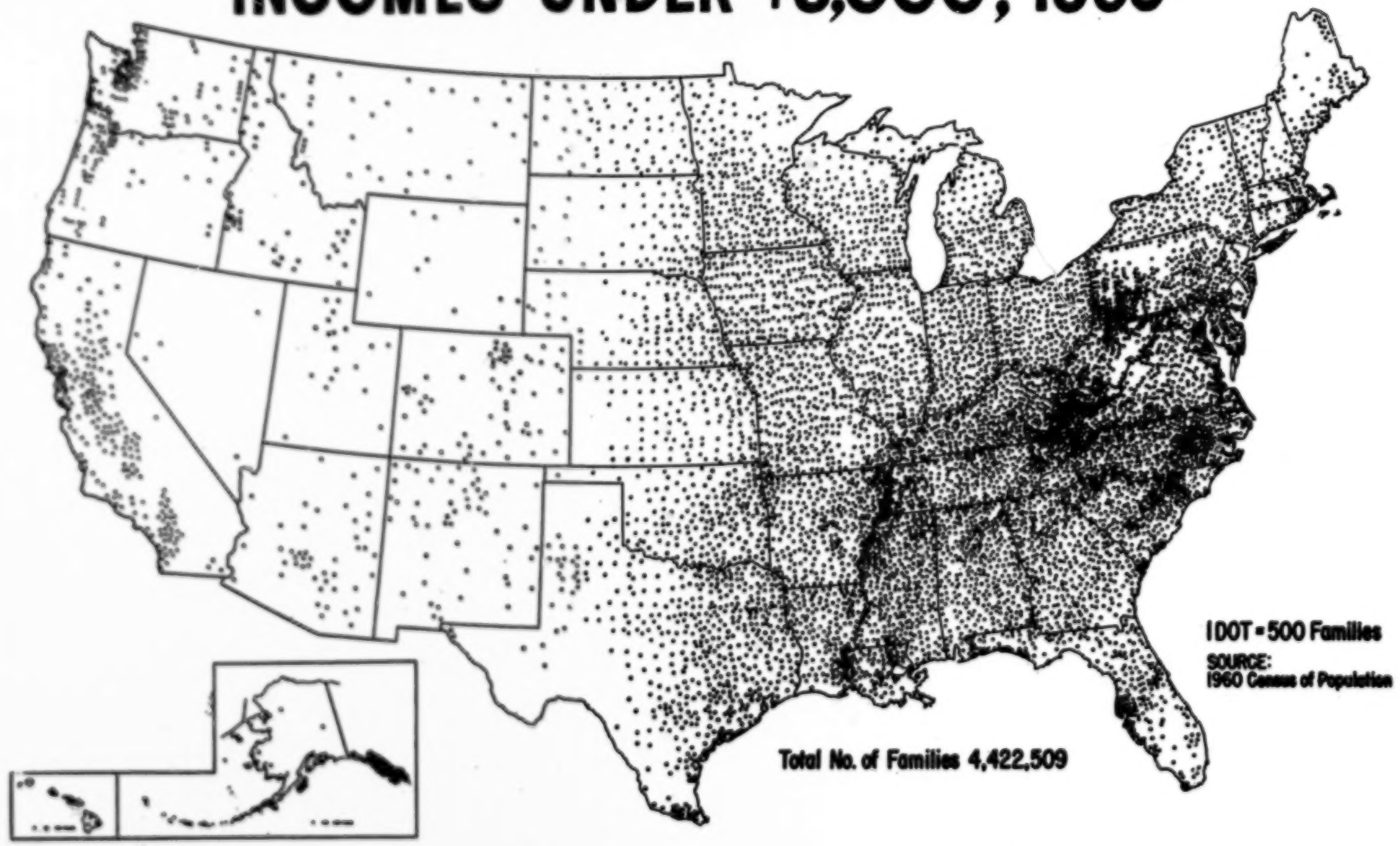

Figure 1

such nonmetropolitan areas. 4/ In 1960, about 80 percent of the poor families (or 5 million) in this sector were white (2). The proportion of poor nonmetropolitan white families is likely to be at least as high today. This group of white families in nonmetropolitan poverty compares with a U.S. total of 9.65 million white and nonwhite families with reported 1959 net cash incomes of less than $3,000. When we extend our definition of poverty to include poor families with net cash incomes of less than $4,000 (to offset general price increases since 1960) some 85 percent of all poor families (or 7.2 million) in nonmetropolitan territory, i.e., rural farm, rural nonfarm, and nonmetropolitan urban places, were white. About 71 percent of all poor families in central city areas were white.

As we have emphasized, white Americans in poverty continue to be an emerging category of individuals, families, and groups who do not share in the social and economic benefits, including public services and institutions, comparable to those available to the rest of the population. Accordingly, a working definition of poverty can be considered as a relative lack of achievement motivation and/or economic opportunity, including an unawareness of or incapacity to participate in social and economic activities valued by U.S. citizens as necessary to a full life.

SOME ILLUSTRATIVE TYPES OF POVERTY

Because white Americans in rural and nonmetropolitan poverty are found in a number of different circumstances and scattered communities, we have chosen to represent their predicament by a series of four model situations based on the relative economic status of a county. The four poverty types were classified as follows:

(a) the percentage of the total county or regional population that is white;

4/ For at least two reasons, these nonmetropolitan communities are considered to be the most fruitful units of analyses for program improvements: (1) From 1950 to 1960, the established trend was for counties with no town of at least 10,000 to suffer the least percentage increase in nonfarm employment, relatively high rates of outmigration, and special difficulties due to population sparsity in providing adequate public services and facilities at per capita costs comparable to other areas. Partial recognition of this spillover of problems to towns larger than 2,500 has occurred in recent legislation. For example, under P.L. 89-240, the Farmers Home Administration is now authorized to help finance housing and community water and sewer systems in towns of up to 5,500, instead of 2,500 as before. (2) There is increasing, if not universal, recognition of the need for joint planning of antipoverty and development programs on a multicounty basis to reinforce activities at county, State, and regional levels. The President has directed all Federal agencies to recognize such multicounty units adopted by the States to the maximum feasible extent. Multicounty planning and related action programs can provide improved mobilization of the resources of both traditionally defined rural areas and neighboring small communities. Despite the general problems of rural areas cited above, the Annual and Final Report of the Area Redevelopment Administration (Dec. 1965) reveals that more than half (65,000 out of 117,875) of the reported jobs created by that agency from May 1, 1961 to August 31, 1965 were in rural areas as defined by the Census Bureau. Already of course, the likely fruitfulness of working with these consolidated communities is formally recognized by many State development groups, in the Appalachian Redevelopment Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-4), authorizing local development districts, and in the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-136), authorizing multicounty economic development districts. Related examples are OEO's multicounty Community Action Agencies and Resource Conservation and Development Districts and Rural Renewal Areas served by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

(b) the percentage of the total county or regional population that consists of low-income whites (based on the Council of Economic Advisers interim definition of poverty, although the current OEO definition is also applicable);

(c) the ratio of whites in poverty to nonwhites in poverty;

(d) the overall economic situation of the area.

It should be pointed out that the type of poverty in a location appears to be correlated both with a general kind of area poverty problem as well as an individual form of poverty status.

The four types do not necessarily reflect exact conditions in any county. There are, for example, a number of economic variants in which a particular county or cluster of counties may not be representative of a given situation, such as pockets of poverty, or pockets of affluence within a larger depressed or affluent region. In all of the types, the poor share in a number of common circumstances and social deprivations such as lack of skills, educational underachievement, and lack of adequate community facilities and services. Our approach stresses differences based on location, concentration, and relative economic opportunity (table 1).

Type I: A Depressed Area With a Majority of Poor Whites 5/

Type I consists of areas in which the vast majority of the people are white and the greater part of this population is poor. 6/ Examples which readily come to mind are southern Appalachia, the Ozarks, and the Upper Great Lakes Region (7,11,13). These areas are usually isolated and lack the arteries of communication and transportation that are necessary for economic growth (fig. 2). Typical family situations are those with a long history of chronic intergenerational poverty. Families generally have the solidarity of a male head as the chief earner. However, due to a steadily decreasing number of available jobs, stress on the solidarity of the family structure is expected to be great. Families in such extremely impoverished regions have come to be dependent on off-farm income or welfare as their major, if not sole, source of sustenance.

Most of the areas of type I poverty, although rural, are not primarily agricultural. Heavy dependence on declining industries such as mining, and depletion of natural resources, have left most of the available manpower unemployed or underemployed (7,8).

The size of an average "farm" owned by a local resident is often too small to produce income anywhere near adequate without some private or public assistance, including the organization of cooperatives. Often the idea of cooperative organization is unfamiliar to the people in these areas or runs counter to their belief in self reliance. Provincial attitudes and a traditional outlook, including a tendency to prefer the familiar, help to reinforce a low economic status. 7/

Educational achievement levels, as in all poverty situations, are low. Likewise, the quality, staffing, and facilities of educational institutions trail those of nonpoverty locations. The median number of years completed per person may average, at

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5/ Generalizations were drawn from a number of sources and reports other than those listed.

6/ For suggested types corresponding to various States, see table 1.

7/ We do not intend to suggest here, or elsewhere, that poor rural whites have a monopoly on such characteristics. On the contrary, there are reasons to expect that provincialism, for example, is at least as much a characteristic of many residents of large cities.

Table 1.--Poverty types, number of poor rural families, by State, ranking of States in descending order by number of poor rural families, and percentage of State population that was white, 1959

[Poor families are those with net money incomes under $3,000]

States	Suggested poverty types 1/	Ranking by total poor rural families	All poor rural families	Poor rural white families as a percentage of all poor rural families	Percentage of total State population that was white
		Rank	Number	Percent	Percent
Alabama	III,I,IV	7	180,497	64.6	69.9
Arizona		37	23,657	57.8	89.8
Arkansas	I,III	11	148,253	75.7	78.1
California	II,IV	23	103,343	93.7	92.0
Colorado		34	31,910	98.8	97.0
Connecticut	II,IV	42	12,364	98.9	95.6
Delaware	II,IV	45	8,932	74.8	86.1
Florida	III,IV	18	112,039	75.6	82.1
Georgia	III,IV,I	5	187,141	63.3	71.4
Idaho		39	21,094	97.5	98.5
Illinois	II,IV	14	134,958	98.4	89.4
Indiana	II,IV	22	103,594	99.4	94.1
Iowa	II	16	122,508	99.9	99.0
Kansas	IV,II	26	69,918	99.0	95.4
Kentucky	I,II,IV	4	204,997	95.4	92.8
Louisiana	III,IV	15	133,337	55.0	67.9
Maine	II,I	33	32,833	99.0	99.4
Maryland	I,III,IV	28	45,354	76.5	83.0
Massachusetts		38	23,619	97.7	97.6
Michigan	II,IV	20	108,215	97.6	90.6
Minnesota	II,I	17	115,671	99.1	98.8
Mississippi	III,IV	6	187,115	45.6	57.7
Missouri	I,IV,II,III	8	169,102	96.6	90.8
Montana		40	20,500	91.9	96.4
Nebraska	II	27	64,942	97.4	95.4
Nevada		50	3,315	88.2	92.3
New Hampshire	II	43	11,283	99.9	99.6
New Jersey	IV,II	35	27,837	88.7	91.3
New Mexico		36	26,743	78.6	92.1
New York	IV,II	21	104,805	97.4	91.1
North Carolina	I,III,IV	1	283,962	65.7	74.6
North Dakota	II,IV	32	35,726	96.9	98.0
Ohio	II,IV	13	138,240	98.4	91.8
Oklahoma	IV	24	98,982	91.6	90.5
Oregon		31	36,502	98.6	97.9
Pennsylvania	I,III,IV	9	168,551	98.5	92.4
Rhode Island		47	4,916	97.2	97.6

--Continued

Table 1.--Poverty types, number of poor rural families, by State, ranking of States in descending order by number of poor rural families, and percentage of State population that was white, 1959--Continued

[Poor families are those with net money incomes under $3,000]

States	Suggested poverty types 1/	Ranking by total poor rural families	All poor rural families	Poor rural white families as a percentage of all poor rural families	Percentage of total State population that was white
		Rank	Number	Percent	Percent
South Carolina	III,IV,I	12	141,278	43.9	65.1
South Dakota	II,IV	29	44,680	94.9	96.0
Tennessee	I,III,IV	3	210,109	87.6	83.5
Texas	III,IV,II,I	2	261,435	81.9	87.4
Utah	II	44	10,397	93.9	98.1
Vermont	II,I	41	15,759	99.8	99.8
Virginia	III,I,IV	10	162,194	71.1	79.2
Washington	II	30	44,199	96.4	96.4
West Virginia	I,IV	19	110,887	95.5	95.1
Wisconsin	II,I	25	98,425	99.0	97.6
Wyoming		46	7,305	95.3	97.8
Alaska		48	4,801	31.4	77.2
Hawaii		49	4,365	26.5	32.0
Total	---	---	4,422,589	83.4	88.6

1/ Based on the best estimate of the type of poverty conditions descriptive of the State as a whole. Types overlap State boundaries and are more concretely applicable to counties. Because of insufficient data or sparse rural population, some States have no type listed.

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1960. Compiled by the Area Economic Development Branch, RDED, ERS, and the Human Resources Branch, Economic Development Division, ERS.

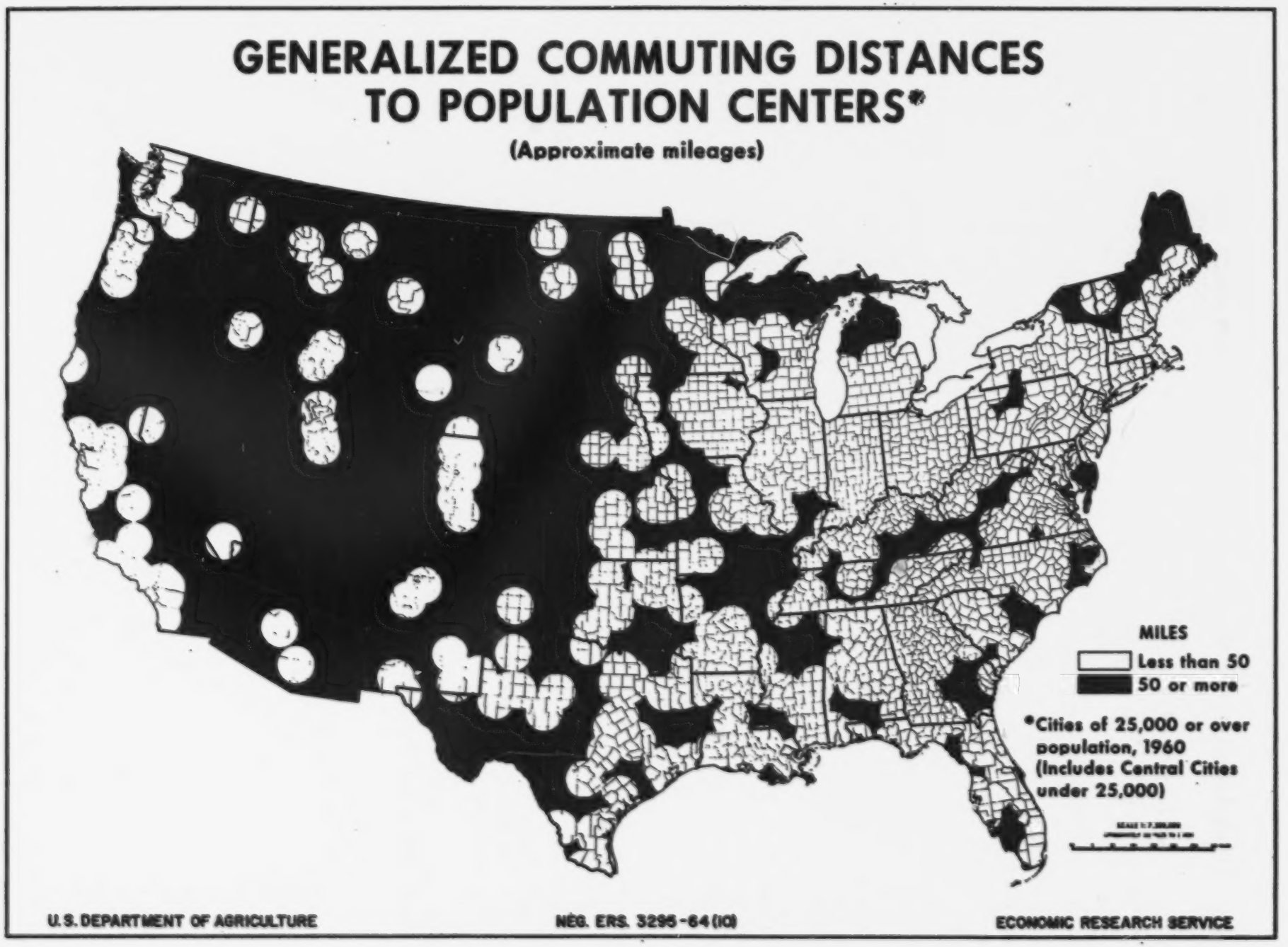
GENERALIZED COMMUTING DISTANCES
TO POPULATION CENTERS*
(Approximate mileages)
MILES
Less than 50
50 or more
*Cities of 25,000 or over population, 1960 (Includes Central Cities under 25,000)
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Figure 2

most, about eight; in several counties as high as 70 to 80 percent of the adult population may have less than a seventh-grade education (9).

Youth, in the prime working ages, tends to leave for distant central cities where more opportunities seem available. (Ill-equipped both in basic education and work skills, some may return bitterly disappointed at their lack of success, and prefer to accept their deprivations in the hill country of "home" rather than face seemingly greater hardship in an alien world.) This large exodus of youth places further strain on an already weakened community social system. It serves to further deplete the decaying community of its available talent and its potential leadership, thus aggravating the dependency problems of the aged.

Type II: A Relatively Affluent Area With a Poor White Minority

Type II illustrates situations in which whites in poverty are a distinct economic minority and nearly all residents of the area are white. The highly productive and mechanized farming areas of the Midwest are typical examples. However, since the hired farm working force contains a large number of white laborers, other areas with highly specialized food crops such as Michigan, Washington, and the central valley of California also reflect problems common to type II poverty situations.

In poverty of type II, rural farm residents may still comprise 40 percent of the total population, or even more. Commercial farms with total annual cash sales of $10,000 or more will continue to be a source of declining employment opportunity for the existing labor force (5).

The overall economic status of the area reflects a medium to affluent balanced family income level. The family median income approximates $4,000 (fig. 3). Dependency ratios, i.e., the ratio of persons under 20 years of age and 65 years and over to those 20 through 64 follow the national and State norms. So do other indicators of poverty status. In these areas, the number of poor nonwhites is a distinct minority among the poor.

Education facilities in these areas are superior, on the average, to those in type I (depressed) areas, yet the educational attainment levels of poor whites are very similar to those of poor whites in other rural areas. One of the notable reasons for this is the higher proportion of children who do not attend kindergarten. Some authorities have argued that this lack of preschool training contributed greatly to low rates of educational attainment and limited achievement values. (Many communities, of course, do not have public kindergartens.)

The rural poor are thought to have certain conservative values that tend to isolate them psychologically as well as socially. Thus, remedial programs, such as Head Start, face the difficult challenge of changing values which tend to initiate the poor rural child into the culture of poverty.

Migratory farmworkers who are often employed on large commercial farms in these areas present special problems. Migratory subsistence living consists of one of the most severe and vulnerable aspects of the poverty problem because it tends to hold the youth. The child comes to be valued for his ability to turn out an adult's share of work. Other factors limiting his achievement potential include: Lack of a continuing contact with a community, insufficient medical and health care, and low and irregular school attendance.

The cyclic aspects of poverty are illustrated by the irregular school attendance of children of migrant farmworkers. Some 140,000 children of workers will likely miss

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME OF ALL FAMILIES, 1959-BY COUNTIES

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Figure 3

school this fall. Of this number, about 50,000 will be on the road from October to May, traveling with a migrant parent from one job to another. Another 90,000 may miss the first few weeks of school because they are still away harvesting (15). The basic problem appears to be not so much that there are no special programs for this group. Rather, it is a case where the persistence of certain habits, living patterns, and methods of crop production reinforce poverty.

Another characteristic of type II poverty is the relatively frequent dependence of residents upon part-time and seasonal employment. Due to somewhat lower rates of overall outmigration, the percentage of those 65 and over is likely to run higher than the national or regional average.

Development of light industry and strategic and coordinated enlargement of community size are necessary so that the available farm labor force will have adequate access to nonfarm jobs. Lack of developed skills in the clerical and manual occupations will remain a major problem among the youth of white poverty families.

Type III: A Relatively Depressed Area With a Poor White Minority Within a Poor Nonwhite Majority

This model represents situations in which whites are part of the larger majority of the economically deprived, but find themselves a color minority. Illustrative areas are scattered throughout the East South Central and the South Atlantic States. These include a number of counties in the "Deep South" and parts of the Atlantic Seaboard ranging west across the Florida panhandle and the Gulf States beyond the Mississippi.

Agriculture and other rural occupations remain a major source of income and employment, except for some areas with textile and food milling industries. Declining employment on railroads has further complicated the poverty problem. Although the South has shown an increase in economic growth in recent years, especially in light industry and manufacturing, it still contains most of the Nation's rural-farm poverty. For the most part, those who live in poverty work in agriculture. In addition, the increasing reliance on farming methods that use relatively less unskilled labor has decreased these manpower needs, thus further intensifying the underemployment and welfare problems.

One of the most predominant poverty situations in type III concerns small-plot farmers and tenant farmers. In Mississippi, for example, more than 50 percent of the land is in commercial farms with annual cash sales of less than $5,000, including part-time and part-retirement farms (5). Complicating factors include technologically inefficient farm organization as well as a chronic lack of economic and community organization generally.

Outmigration continues to intensify the poverty problem of older whites. Many of the nonwhites continue to leave the areas for employment in northern central cities. Similarly, white youth of prime working ages are also migrating, although at a somewhat lower rate (16). This leaves behind whites in older age groups, who are either out of the labor force or find it relatively difficult to enter new occupations. Males in these groups have limited potential for off-farm job training. When other family members are included, the severity of the dependency problem represented by such individuals becomes intensified.

Type IV: Areas Ranging from Poor to Affluent With a Relatively Balanced Proportion of Poor Whites and Poor Nonwhites

The poverty situations presented in type IV are most easily discernible as variations of types I and II.

In types I and II, the geographic boundaries are more clearly distinguishable than in type IV. Examples of type IV areas include:

(a) places where the ratio of whites and nonwhites in poverty is about the same, but population density varies; and

(b) locations which range in overall economic status from poverty to affluence.

Situations which are similar to type I are depressed areas that lack racial homogeneity. Situations like type II are further removed from general poverty, but lack a color majority.

Areas where representative cases are found occur in States adjacent to the South as well as in selected areas within the South; in areas of continuing agricultural prosperity which have made successful adjustments to technology; and in areas which depend primarily on the hired farm labor force to harvest specialty fruit and vegetable crops. In addition, we may expect problem situations to occur in areas undergoing change from a predominantly agricultural economy to one of light industry. Demographic characteristics will reflect a high rate of change from rural farm to nonfarm and urban residence. Finally, areas surrounding large central cities or where a suburban fringe extends into a rural farming community may also constitute type IV poverty.

These situations suggest fairly rapid social and technological changes. Such circumstances present special problems for poor whites, especially those who are more likely to be in recent migratory status, and others who are more likely to feel the effects of rapidly changing social and economic conditions. Adjustment problems tend to intensify as a result of greater proximity to others of higher status, as well as increased contact with nonwhites of similar status.

Perhaps some of the greatest adjustment problems will occur among low-income whites in type IV situations. In type I, poverty is more of a pervasive problem, and therefore, may have certain "soothing" advantages of similarity among the families in the area. In type II, some possible residual advantages may accrue to low-income whites from being in a more affluent area. In type III, low-income whites may be thought to gain some reassurance from a traditional pattern of living commonly referred to as "discrimination." However, the climate of opinion represented in this situation helps to reinforce and continue the poverty status of the whites as well. In type IV, greater competition for a relatively limited number of available jobs, readjustment of attitudes of the white migrant toward the low-income nonwhite, and increased interracial contact in general, might be points of interpersonal conflict with severe economic implications.

SOME ASSOCIATED ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC SEPARATION

Some elements of the foreclosure of opportunity for poor rural whites which have been mentioned may be less strikingly obvious than for other particularly disadvantaged ethnic groups. Yet the persistence of such problems among the white population is forceful evidence as to the intractability of their causes.

Both low income and lack of personal assets tend to separate poor whites from their fellow citizens. The causes may be one or many--personal, community, industry

or program-related. Direct personal causes may include a failure to recognize and realize potential economic opportunities, overinvestment in an uncertain enterprise, ill health, accidents, and mental breakdown.

Irrespective of the causes, the conditions of economic separation tend to predispose the poor to still further separation from American life--social, psychological, and cultural--which confirm their disadvantaged economic status. Assuming that low-income families wish to participate, many low-income families, including some not considered poor, are effectively excluded from PTA meetings and numerous other community activities, including those which are church-affiliated, because they work irregular or unusual hours, or lack clothes or social attributes necessary for successful community activity.

An example of these difficulties is the small dairy farmer who obtained a janitor's job. He quickly found the need to sell his cows and rent out his cropland since his employers and associates objected to his presence when he was "smelling of cows." It is, of course, also important to point out that many wealthy people may be excluded from community participation by schedule conflicts, simple lack of interest, and for other reasons. However, these families may yet enjoy many of the benefits of community activities and successfully substitute cash for other contributions-in-kind.

It may be thought that poor families in a predominantly affluent community can enjoy many benefits of life in such a community, irrespective of their financial status. Yet special and severe psychological problems have been reported. For example, the children of such poor families, sensitive to their differences--either real or attributed--may find it difficult to participate fully in school activities, even school lunch programs.

On the other hand, in a community where rural poverty is the norm, the social withdrawal of families may be compounded by the isolation of that community from the rest of the State and the Nation. Community activities may be quite visible (perhaps more so than in a wealthy suburb), but the question is whether such activities tend to develop relations with other communities or intensify isolation. Are the activities centered on upgrading education, for example?

The very existence of low-income status sets in train further economic and other forces to perpetuate the condition. In seeking remedies for poverty, this paper tends to place greater stress on factors that perpetuate the condition and common measures devised to alleviate it.

We suggest that:

(1) The problems of escape from poverty may be more uniform than the means of entry; and

(2) Avoiding further complication of these problems may necessitate looking at problems of escape from poverty (for white and nonwhite) in a more general context of widening opportunities for the poor and not-so-poor to participate more fully in the larger world of economic and social activities.

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SEPARATION

The Case of the Small Farmer

This is mainly a problem of rural whites. Under present economic conditions, the small farmer does not have sufficient resources to enable him and his family to

earn an income from farming alone that would place him, and allow him to remain, above the poverty line. For the farmer with a small acreage, the price support programs and farm income support programs can usually make only a limited contribution to his income.

However, in the overall adjustment sense, it could be argued that the major regressive factors affecting the small farmer are his present location and his ownership of insufficient resources. The white farmer is more likely to own land than the nonwhite. Hence, his family has an additional incentive to remain on the farm. The prospects for such a family obtaining significant increases in income and significant benefits from additional community services and facilities hinge on the ability and willingness of the family members to gain access to these opportunities throughout the year. Poor farmers, like other rural people, need to be within convenient commuting time of a town or group of communities that have a sufficient range of employment and training opportunities. Opinions differ on what size such towns must be. And current data are insufficient for definitive judgment.

However, without some major new technology or resource discovery, it is apparent that, for the same area, the feasible number of towns in sparsely populated parts, as in the western Corn Belt and the Great Plains, is impressively less than elsewhere in the Nation (fig. 2). Even with use of new transportation modes and revision of present transportation systems (and, perhaps, even subsidization of transportation costs for poor farm families in sparsely populated areas) many families of such isolated small farmers may need to relocate in or near distant cities. Present programs provide no explicit help or guidance to enable or expedite such relocation decisions.

This is not to say that relocation has not occurred. Indeed, some investigators point out that most of the exodus from farming has occurred, perhaps ironically, during the periods of relatively high price supports. Even further, price supports and other farm income maintenance programs may have been important indirect causes of this farm exodus. Because of them, wealthier neighbors on larger farms could compete intensively to bid up the sale price of smaller neighboring farms or of their "allotment" acres. (And, of course, these small farms have a relatively higher price because of the conventional, perhaps historic, value of "fixed improvements.")

A small farmer has limited and insufficient programs he can turn to—even though his expected income may still fall short of the conventional poverty line in the foreseeable future. He has least access to programs to upgrade his income from farming and may be effectively excluded from some alternative programs. For example, home-ownership may prevent him from access to special housing funds for low-income people, unless he chooses to repair and renovate the home rather than relocate.

In sparsely populated areas, and in other areas such as the Ozarks, Appalachia, the Southeast, and the Delta, small farmers apparently share other disadvantages that subject them to continued poverty. And white families, because of their relatively higher representation as farmowners, are more chronically vulnerable to these disadvantages. For example, educational services and facilities, as suggested previously, are likely to be below national norms in school size as well as range and quality of course offerings. Where vocational education is available, it is more likely to be limited to areas of declining opportunity for rural youth. Employment services are also likely to be limited, particularly in their ability to refer applicants between the two sectors of farm and nonfarm work. Public transportation services are apt to be quite limited, and, in fact, may not exist without special subsidies. Beyond that, technological changes may further reduce the income expectations of areas with many small farms, as has happened in the cotton-producing areas of the South. Such a similar impact on many adjoining farms further restricts the ability of these residents to support adequate community facilities and services.

Rural Nonfarm Families

Rural nonfarm poor families face similarly reduced opportunities for escaping from poverty. In sparsely settled areas, farm enlargement and mechanization and increasing patronage by farmers of distant service centers, tend to make superfluous many businesses located in small towns. Yet these victims of major structural changes in the economy of the Nation have no identifiable programs to enable them to anticipate liquidation by relocating for more profitable businesses or occupations. Poor rural businessmen (most are white) do not have the equivalent of the relocation assistance available to victims of urban renewal, although their disadvantageous circumstances may be quite validly compared with those of the businessmen in an urban slum. Indeed, the rural businessman may have substantially less insurance against losses caused by community changes than his urban counterpart.

COMMUNICATION WITH POOR WHITES

One major problem facing most poverty program leaders is capturing the attention and cooperation of those whom the programs are specifically designed to serve. Along with the usual basic inadequacies in community organization and services, there exist prominent barriers to communication--often a spirit of disinterest or suspicion. The poor, too, have their pride. A certain distaste in having to take something for nothing may predispose many among them to shun or to give only token recognition to the common efforts of professional philanthropy. Such problems are a general manifestation of most of the poor, regardless of color.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF POOR RURAL WHITES ASSOCIATED WITH RECENT PROGRAMS

Recent programs to aid the poor and to upgrade poor areas involve a parallel danger that they will actually reduce opportunities for some whites to escape from rural poverty. Disadvantages to whites not previously cited, result from two emerging situations: (1) Antipoverty, civil rights, and related activities tend to be identified, particularly in the South, as programs for Negroes rather than for disadvantaged people generally. (2) Emphasis on the poor, as they are identified through an arbitrary, discrete criterion such as income level, tends to increase the chances of ignoring the very real problems of those just beyond arbitrary poverty lines. These borderline cases are the most likely alternative candidates for the apparently limited job, training, and other community opportunities in a depressed rural area. Situations described in types III and IV should reflect a below-average ratio of poor white participation.

Examples of serious difficulties imposed by the erroneous identification of antipoverty programs as programs for Negroes only are: (1) Closing of public schools in response to integration requirements, and (2) underrepresentation of poor whites in antipoverty activities that require participation by the poor.

The following circumstances highlight the great difficulty of increasing the participation of poor rural whites in antipoverty programs:

(1) By contrast, even in affluent urban communities without significant ethnic problems, the proportionate number of well-educated citizens participating in meetings addressed to major problems, such as juvenile delinquency and zoning, is quite low indeed.

(2) Poor rural communities where greater participation of low-income whites is currently expected are areas disadvantaged by relatively poor

educational systems, lack of sufficient numbers of local jobs, little previous involvement with public programs, and relatively little experience and instruction in community activities.

(3) Perhaps most crucially, residents of such poor communities are likely to be least informed on possible benefits from further participation in community activities, and their participation may entail relatively major short-term personal and family sacrifices.

SUMMARY SUGGESTIONS, EXPLORATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Poor rural whites are a major and persistent poverty problem; they have apparently received insufficient attention--considering the size, distribution, and special characteristics of their population. In lieu of conclusions concerning these people, it is suggested that (1) whites in poverty, as with other disadvantaged subgroups, tend to be separated from major national markets (particularly labor markets) and the generally accepted American ways of life; (2) emergence of many special programs to cater to "target groups" on the basis of economic and social need, together with increasingly exclusive definitions of these groups, tend to accentuate this separation; (3) such separation may work particularly to the detriment of poor rural whites, and those with incomes just above arbitrary poverty lines; (4) major new programs or major reorientations of present programs, including consolidation of these programs, may be needed to remedy this situation; (5) this needed new program emphasis should be toward unified efforts that provide continuing opportunities for all citizens, rather than further polarization and fragmentation of "special groups"; and (6) this new emphasis will likely involve development of programs for all nonmetropolitan territory that strengthen the effectiveness of programs in census-defined rural areas.

As a guide to the development of consolidated programs, we have sketched four area types of poverty as follows:

I. -- Depressed area with a majority of whites in poverty;

II. -- Relatively affluent area with a minority of whites in poverty;

III. -- Relatively depressed area with a poor white minority within a majority of nonwhites in poverty;

IV. -- Area ranging from poor to affluent with balanced proportions of poor whites and poor nonwhites.

These types apply to rural and nonmetropolitan areas as defined by the census. This extended application recognizes the increasing emphasis on multicounty units as a basis for coordinated programming.

It has been suggested that a combination of circumstances places poor rural whites at a particular disadvantage and tends to insure their continued poverty status. Among these are:

(1) A tendency, considered acute in the South (types III and IV), to identify poverty, by-and-large, as a nonwhite problem, and for the white community to consider programs in these areas to be aimed almost exclusively at the Negro community;

(2) Trends of increasing competition among whites and nonwhites for the few available income opportunities in depressed areas (types III and IV);

(3) Emphasis on expected social participation of all age groups as a qualifying condition for program benefits--a practice that apparently exceeds performance expectations in nonpoverty areas;

(4) Communication barriers among the poor, and between the poor and nonpoor program personnel. This includes lack of a feeling of common identity and hence a chronic need for improved social and economic organization;

(5) A higher incidence of small farmers among the white population in locations that preclude access to economic opportunities, and a lack of remedial programs to alleviate their "boxed-in" condition.

Over and above these special conditions, poor rural whites are, of course, thought to share with other poor critical inadequacies in schooling (particularly in the early years), health, income maintenance payments (particularly for the aged), and in overall access to community services and facilities.

It is thought that further inquiries now underway and those that may take place in the future will confirm the above special disadvantages of rural whites. If so, urgent needs include:

(1) Design and implementation of a national program for income and employment opportunities, particularly nonfarm jobs, so that significant amounts of new industry are concentrated in hitherto depressed areas and regions, consistent with the location of natural resources. Such a new concentration of industry implies the need to encourage systematic inmigration of key personnel with above-average income and educational levels and to establish in cooperation with them communities that are attractive places both to work and live.

(2) Establishment of qualifying conditions for program participation by the poor that preclude the erroneous identification of antipoverty and welfare programs as Negro programs.

(3) Provision of incentive or compensation payments for owners of rural property and businesses, so that they may be able to relocate on a par with disadvantaged urban property owners in response to disadvantageous changes in community economic conditions.

(4) Increased emphasis on education and training programs for all children, especially those of preschool and elementary age, as well as exceptional children, including the gifted and retarded. Since a great part of the poverty problem has its roots in "cultural retardation" and functional illiteracy, a basic remedial education program is of paramount importance. In addition to these needs, occupational training should place increasingly greater emphasis on nonfarm occupations and professions. Finally, a complementary need is the establishment of special adult education and training centers in strategic locations.

(5) Continued improvements in collecting timely and relevant data, and in their analysis and interpretation to enable community leaders, program managers, and others to develop more effective programs, and better implement existing programs.

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